

Contribution of the British To Develop Indian English Literature

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ABSTRACT:

Development of Indian English Literature in India gathered momentum with the consolidation of British imperialism in India. As we know the British sow the seed of Indian Writing in English during the period of the British rule in India. English language and literature in India starts with the advent of East India Company in India. It all started in the summers of 1608 when Emperor Jahangir, in the courts of Mughals, welcomed Captain William Hawkins, Commander of British Naval Expedition Hector. It was India's first tryst with an Englishman and English. Jahangir later allowed Britain to open a permanent port and factory on the special request of King James IV that was conveyed by his ambassador Sir Thomas Roe. English were here to stay. Indian writings in English were heavily influenced by the Western art form of the novel. It was typical for the early Indian English language writers to use English unadulterated by Indian words to convey experiences that were primarily Indian. The core reason behind this step was the fact that most of the readers were either British or British educated Indians. In the early 20th century, when the British conquest of India was achieved, a new breed of writers started to emerge on the block. These writers were essentially British who were born or brought up or both in India. Their writing consisted of Indian themes and sentiments but the way of storytelling was primarily western. They had no reservation in using native words, though, to signify the context. This group consisted likes of Rudyard Kipling, Jim Corbett and George Orwell among others. In fact, some of the writings of that era are still considered to be the masterpieces of English Literature.

KEYWORDS: Contribution of British, Development , British works & strategy, English Literature.

INTRODUCTION:

The development of English Literature in India was a result of the inter-mingling of the social codes of the British and the Indians. There was a definite change in the mind-set of the people as well a greater reception of English language in the country which prompted many writers to take up English as the medium of instruction and expression, and thus English literature gradually developed. From the beginning of the nineteenth century a new order began to emerge and a fresh era was inaugurated in Bengali literature. It was, in fact, after the establishment of the Fort William College that important steps towards the development of modern Indian languages were taken. There is a variety of opinion about the first definitive Indian text in

English, although critics agree that Indian literature in English dates back to at least the early nineteenth century. Its beginnings receive their motivation from three sources - the British government's educational reforms, the work of missionaries, and the reception of English language and literature by upper-class Indians.

History of English Literature in India

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Naval Expedition Hector. It was India's first tryst with an Englishman and English. Jahangir later allowed Britain to open a permanent port and factory on the special request of King James IV that was conveyed by his ambassador Sir Thomas Roe. English were here to stay.

As East India Company spread its wing in southern peninsula, English language started to get newer pockets of influence. But it was still time for the first English book to capitalize. Late 17th century saw the coming of printing press in India but the publication were largely confined to either printing Bible or government decrees. Then came newspapers. It was in 1779 that the first English Newspaper named Hickey's Bengal Gazette was published in India. The breakthrough in Indian English literature came in 1793 A.D. when a person by the name of Sake Dean Mahomet published a book in London titled Travels of Dean Mahomet. This was essentially Mahomet's travel narrative that can be put somewhere between a Non-Fiction and a Travelogue.

In its early stages, the Indian writings in English were heavily influenced by the Western art form of the novel. It was typical for the early Indian English language writers to use English unadulterated by Indian words to convey experiences that were primarily Indian. The core reason behind this step was the fact that most of the readers were either British or British educated Indians. In the coming century, the writings were largely confined to writing history chronicles and government gazettes.

In the early 20th century, when the British conquest of India was achieved, a new breed of writers started to emerge on the block. These writers were essentially British who were born or brought up or both in India. Their writing consisted of Indian themes and

sentiments but the way of storytelling was primarily western. They had no reservation in using native words, though, to signify the context. This group consisted likes of Rudyard Kipling, Jim Corbett and George Orwell among others. Books such as Kim, The Jungle Book, 1984, Animal Farm and The man-eaters of Kumaon etc were liked and read all over the English-speaking world. In fact, some of the writings of that era are still considered to be the masterpieces of English Literature. In those periods, natives were represented by the likes of Rabindra Nath Tagore and Sarojini Naidu. In fact, Geetanjali helped Tagore win Nobel Prize for Literature in the year 1913.

It was in late seventies that a new breed of Convent, boarding school educated and elite class of novelists and writers started to come on block. The likes of Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Amitabh Ghosh and Dominique Lepierre set the literature world on fire. Rushdie's Midnight Children won Booker in 1981 and send the message loud and clear that Indians are here to stay. India became independent from Britain in 1947, and the English language was supposed to be phased out by 1965. However, today English and Hindi are the official languages. Indian English is characterized by treating mass nouns as count nouns, frequent use of the "isn't it?" tag, use of more compounds, and a different use of prepositions. With its distinct flavor, Indian English writings are there to stay. With the surge of English speaking population, the future looks anything but bleak.

The British Strategy to develop Indian English

The British took a keen interest in introducing the English language in India. They had many reasons for doing so.

Educating Indians in the English language was a part of their strategy. The Indians would be ready to work as clerks on low wages while for the same work the British would demand much higher wages. This would reduce the expenditure on administration. It was also expected to create a class of Indians who were loyal to the British and were not able to relate to other Indians. This class of Indians would be taught to appreciate the culture and opinion of the British. In addition, they would also help to increase the market for British goods. They wanted to use education as a means to strengthen their political authority in the country. They assumed that a few educated Indians would spread English culture to the masses and that they would be able to rule through this class of educated Indians. The British gave jobs to only those Indians who knew English thereby compelling many Indians to go in for English education.

Contribution of few Britisher in Indian English Literature

English literature, the body of written works produced in the [English language](#) by inhabitants of the [British Isles](#) (including Ireland) from the 7th century to the present day. This group consisted the likes of Rudyard Kipling, Jim Corbett and Emily Eden, Paul Scott, William Dalrymple amongst others. Books such as *Kim*, *White Mughals*, *A Matter of Honour* and *The Man-eaters of Kumaon* etc. were well admired and read all over the English-speaking world with British Indian English Literature being

noticed as a special and individual genre, the first ever prestigious traces being outlined for the next decades to come. In fact, some of those pieces of that era are still deemed to be the master pieces of English Literature such as.

‘CURRY AND RICE’ ATKINSON, BY GEORGE FRANCKLIN

He wrote and illustrated numerous occasional papers in the periodicals of the sixties, especially *The Leisure Hour*, familiarizing English readers with the civil and military life of Europeans in India: he published *Pictures from the North, in pen and pencil, sketched during a summer ramble, 1848: The Campaign in India, 1857–8, from drawings made during the eventful period of the Great Mutiny*: dedicated to H.M. Queen Victoria, 1859: this was his most finished work: *Curry and Rice, on 40 Plates, or the Ingredients of Social Life at our Station in India*: second edition, 1859: an unrivalled series of pictures of life in the old cantonments in pre-mutiny days, dedicated to W. M. Thackeray, a book still in demand: he wrote also *Indian Spices for English Tables, 120 humorous sketches*, 1860: died about 1861.

The subtitle of this delightful book of sketches is “The Ingredients of Social Life at ‘Our Station’ in India”. Captain Atkinson describes with a delicious wry touch the ramshackle routine in the backwoods of British India in the 1850s: the innocent young subaltern, the disillusioned old major with his Indian family, the mangy pack of hounds they hunt with and the even mangier cattle in the bazaar, the cigar-chomping padre, and the servants fussing around their sweating masters. Atkinson’s illustrations are as charming and piquant as his prose.

‘UP THE COUNTRY’ BY EMILY EDEN

Emily Eden was born in Westminster. She was an English poet and novelist who gave witty accounts of English life in the early 19th century. She wrote a celebrated account of her travels in India, and two novels that sold well. She was also an accomplished amateur artist.

In her late thirties, she and her sister Fanny travelled to India, where her brother [George Eden, 1st Earl of Auckland](#) was in residence as [Governor-General](#) from 1835 to 1842. She wrote accounts of her time in India, later collected in the volume *Up The Country: Letters Written to Her Sister from the Upper Provinces of India* (1867). While the emphasis of her Indian writings was on travel descriptions, local colour and details of the ceremonial and social functions that she attended, Eden also provided a perceptive record of the major political events that occurred during her brother's term of office. These included the total destruction of a British/Indian army during the [retreat from Kabul in 1842](#); a disaster for which George Eden was held partly responsible.

'KIM' BY RUDYARD KIPLING

Joseph Rudyard Kipling was an English journalist, short-story writer, poet, and novelist. He was born in India on 30 December 1865. Kipling's works of fiction include [The Jungle Book](#) (1894), [Kim](#) (1901), and many short stories, including "[The Man Who Would Be King](#)" (1888). His poems include "[Mandalay](#)" (1890), "[Gunga Din](#)" (1890), "[The Gods of the Copybook Headings](#)" (1919), "[The White Man's Burden: The United States and the Philippine Islands](#)" (1899), and "[If](#)" (1910). He is seen as an innovator in the art of the short story. His children's books are classics; one critic noted "a versatile and luminous narrative gift."

Kim not only the finest novel in English with an Indian theme but also one of the greatest of English novels in spite of the theme. Kipling wrote *Kim* which was published in 1901, *Kim* is Kipling's last book set in India. In *Something of Myself*, he tells readers how he had long thought of writing about "an Irish boy born in India and mixed up with native life." Written under the influence of his demon—Kipling's word to describe his guardian muse—*Kim* takes in all of India, its rich diversity and intensity of life.

In growing old and evaluating the past, Kipling turned to the best years of his life, his years in India. In *Kim*, Kipling relives his Indian years when everything was secure and his family intact. Kim's yearning for the open road, for its smells, sights, and sounds, is part of the longing

of Kipling himself for the land that quickened his creative impulse and provided his literary success.

'A MATTER OF HONOUR' BY PHILIP MASON

Philip Mason was born on 19 March 1906. He was an English civil servant and author. He is best known for his two-volume book on the [British Raj](#), *The Men Who Ruled India* (written under the pseudonym 'Philip Woodruff', the latter being his mother's maiden name), and his study of the Indian Army, *A Matter of Honour* (1974). *A Matter of Honour* is about How did a few thousand British troops hold down a subcontinent of 200 million people? In his superb short history of the Indian army, Philip Mason, himself a longstanding officer in the elite Indian civil service, evokes the threads of loyalty that bound the British and the sepoys together until the threads snapped in 1857, and even after that brutal rupture were sewn up again, so that the British influence lingers on in the far larger army that independent India deploys today.

'THE SIEGE OF KRISHNAPUR' BY GORDAN FARRELL

James Gordon Farrell was born on 25 January 1935. He was an [English-born](#) novelist of Irish descent. He gained prominence for a series of novels known as "the Empire Trilogy" (*Troubles*, *The Siege of Krishnapur* and *The Singapore Grip*), which deal with the political and human consequences of British colonial rule. Farrell's next book, *The Siege of Krishnapur*, and his last completed work, *The Singapore Grip*, both continue his story of the collapse of British colonial power. The former deals with the [Indian Rebellion of 1857](#). Inspired by historical events such as the sieges of [Cawnpore](#) and [Lucknow](#), the novel is set in the fictional town of Krishnapur, where a besieged British garrison succeeds in holding out for four months against an army of native [sepoys](#) in the face of enormous suffering before being relieved. The massacre of the entire British garrison and their families at Cawnpore was the most shocking single episode in the Mutiny (vengeful British troops yelled "Remember Cawnpore" as they plunged in their bayonets). The

perpetrators were made to lick up the blood of their victims before being slaughtered in their turn. There have been dozens of novels written about the Mutiny, but only Farrell's Cawnpore approaches the condition of art.

'A PASSAGE TO INDIA' BY EDWARD MORGAN

Edward Morgan Forster was born on 1 January 1879. He was an English fiction writer, essayist and librettist. Many of his novels examine class difference and hypocrisy, including A Room with a View (1908), Howards End (1910) and A Passage to India (1924). The last brought him his greatest success. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 16 separate years. Forster spent a second spell in India in the early 1920s as private secretary to Tukojirao III, Maharajah of Dewas. The Hill of Devi is his non-fictional account of this period. After returning to London from India, he completed the last novel of his to be published in his lifetime, A Passage to India (1924), for which he won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for fiction. He also edited the letters of Eliza Fay (1756–1816) from India, in an edition first published in 1925.

'STAYING ON' BY PAUL MARK SCOTT

Paul Mark Scott was born on 25 March 1920. He was an English novelist, playwright and poet, best known for his tetralogy The Raj Quartet. His novel Staying On won the Booker Prize for 1977. Scott's novels draw on his experiences of India and service in the armed forces with strong subtexts of uneasy relationships between male friends or brothers; both the social privilege and the class and racial strata of colonialism are represented, and novel by novel the canvas broadens. The Alien Sky remains the main fictional exploration of a very light-skinned, multiracial British-Indian woman who has married a white man by passing for white. The Jewel in the Crown engages with and rewrites E. M. Forster's A Passage to India (1924), and so is necessarily set in a small, Hindu-majority rural town with an army garrison, but the wider province is implicit, and the later novels spread out to the cold-weather capital on the plains, the

hot-weather capital in the hills, a neighbouring Muslim-ruled princely state, and the railway lines that bind them together – as well as Calcutta, Bombay, and the Burmese theatre of war. The cast also grows to include at least 24 principals, more than 300 named fictional characters, and a number of historical figures including Churchill, Gandhi, Jinnah, Wavell, and Slim. The story is initially that of the gang-rape of a young British woman in 1942, but follows the ripples of the event as they spread out through the relatives and friends of the victim, the child of the rape, those arrested for it but never charged and subsequently interned for political reasons, and the man who arrested them.

Summary

The rise of the Indian Writing in English is, at the onset, to be located historically. Before Indians could write poetry in English, two related preconditions had to be met. First, the English language had to be sufficiently Indianised to be able to express the reality of the Indian situation. Secondly, Indians had to be sufficiently Anglicized to use the English language to express themselves. In 1780, India's first newspaper, 'Hicky's Bengal Gazette', was published in English by James Augustus Hicky. In 1817, the Hindu college, which later became Presidency College, the premier educational institution of Bengal, was founded the development of the English language was largely helped by the contributions of the British but education soon became a monopoly of the rich and the city inhabitants. Some recommended use of vernaculars (regional languages) as the medium of instruction, others were for English. The spread of English language and western education helped Indians to adopt

modern, rational, democratic, liberal and patriotic outlook. It also gave opportunity to the Indians to study in England and learn about the working of democratic institutions there. The writings of John Locke, Ruskin, Mill, Rousseau and many others instilled in them the ideas of liberty, equality, fraternity, human rights and self-government. Also, the important role of press in arousing political awakening and exchange in ideas is noteworthy.

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